HAER No. MT-10

Springdale Bridge
Federal Aid Secondary Route 563
Springdale Vicinity
Park County
Montana

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
DENVER, COLORADO 80225

# HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

## SPRINGDALE BRIDGE

Location: Spanning the Yellowstone River on Federal Aid Secondary Route 563 in the vicinity of Springdale, Montana.

T 1S, R 12E, SE¼ SW¼ Section 15
Quad: Springdale, Montana 7 1/2'
1951, photo revised 1981

Date of Construction: Pennsylvania through truss 1908,
Pratt through truss 1916

Present Owner: Park County
Park County Courthouse
414 E. Callendar
Livingston, Montana

Present Use: Abandoned since 1981.
Traffic now uses a new bridge to cross the Yellowstone, which is located 300 feet downstream from the Old Springdale Bridge.

Significance: The Springdale Bridge is significant for its associations with the development of transportation systems to accommodate settlement and tourism in the early twentieth century; and as an example of the work of the Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company, an important Minneapolis firm who built numerous bridges in Montana primarily during the Homestead Era.

Historians: Tandy R. Ford and Frederick L. Quivik, September 1982.

The Springdale Bridge is located approximately 3/4 of a mile north of the town of Springdale, which is situated in the Upper Yellowstone Valley in South Central Montana. The bridge spans the Yellowstone River along a local north-south running county road (Federal Aid Secondary Route 563) and originally provided access to the once renowned Hunters Hot Springs Spa and Resort; later it served as a crossing for agricultural and recreational traffic.

The present structure is comprised of two pin-connected spans: a 108-foot Pratt through truss (1916) and a 234-foot Pennsylvania through truss (1908). The Pratt is comprised of an eyebar lower chord, hip verticals and diagonals; verticals of two laced channels; and an upper chord of continuous steel plate riveted atop two channel sections with batten plates riveted to their lower chords. The superstructure of the Pennsylvania truss is comprised of a lower chord, hip verticals and the diagonals are eyebars; major verticals are two laced channel sections and subdivided verticals are four laced angle sections above and eyebars below; the upper chord is a continuous steel plate riveted atop two channel sections with lacing bars riveted to their lower flanges. The Pratt has steel I-beam stringers; the Pennsylvania has wood stringers. In both instances, stringers rest on the top flange of steel I-beam floor beams which are riveted to the superstructure. The deck and double driving track are of bridge plank. The spans are supported by concrete abutments and a concrete pier encased in riveted steel plate.

The Springdale Bridge, constructed on a bend in the Yellowstone River, replaced an earlier bridge at the same site. Apparently the 1908 south truss was also damaged and replaced by the 1916 Pratt through truss. Bridges at this site have had a history of damaged sub-structures due to being built on a bend in the Yellowstone River[1]. And in fact, damage to the substructure of the Springdale Bridge, specifically, settling of its north pier, necessitated construction of a new bridge in 1980.

The Springdale Bridge was constructed in 1908 and 1916 for Park County, with county funds, by the Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company. One of several Minneapolis-based bridge construction firms who played a significant role in Montana bridge building, Minneapolis Steel constructed numerous bridges throughout Montana, primarily during the Homestead Period. (Between 1906 and 1914, 14 Montana bridges were designed and built by Minneapolis Steel.)[2]

In 1864 Dr. A.J. Hunter, his wife, and three children joined a small wagon party of emmigrants and gold seekers on its way to the newly discovered gold fields of Montana. They left Colorado just behind John Bozeman and followed him all the way into Montana Territory. Besides Mrs. Hunter, there was only one other woman in the party. Before reaching their destination (Bozeman then Virginia City) the party camped in the foothills of the Crazy Mountains (in the vicinity of the springs and future resort). While out on a hunting trip, Dr. Hunter encountered a

group of Indians camped around and bathing in the hot springs. Because he was a physician, Dr. Hunter recognized the curative and medicinal value of the geothermal waters and later filed a homestead claim for the springs and surrounding land. (Dr. Hunter received the patent for his land in 1882.)[3] It was not until six years later that the Hunter family returned to the springs and built a dam to form a pool and beside it erected a cluster of log cabins.[4] Mrs. Hunter was reported to have been the first white woman to settle in the Yellowstone Valley.[5] Development of the springs got off to a slow start. Up until the defeat of General Custer, the Sioux Indians presented a constant threat to the Hunters. On several occasions the family had to be rescued; once by a detachment of soldiers from the Crow Agency at Mission Creek (located 12 miles to the west) and once by a detachment from Fort Ellis.[6]

When the Northern Pacific Railroad line was completed through Park County in 1882, it brought with it an influx of people including railroad laborers, miners, farmers and new towns sprang up overnight along its route.[7] Springdale was a typical railroad boom town, having been established as the Northern Pacific mainline station for Hunter's Hot Springs Rescrt. It was during this period that Hunter's Hot Springs began to develop into a prominent Montana resort.

In 1885 Cyrus B. Mendenhall purchased the property from Dr. Hunter and invested $150,000 to improve the facilities.

Improvements included construction of a frame hotel, with accommodations for 40, and platting of a village complete with a store, post office and school.[8]

The property again changed hands in 1898 when it was purchased by James A. Murray, a wealthy Butte banker. Murray sought to turn the resort into a steady, year round business. His goal was realized with the construction in 1909, of the famed Dakota Hotel. Built of solid concrete, and of a Mission architectural style the building measured 454 feet in length and between 100-250 feet in width. It could accommodate 300 guests and each room had hot and cold running water. The indoor "plunge" or hot pool measured 103 feet long by 50 feet wide and from three and a half to nine feet deep. Situated along its sides were 40 dressing rooms. Located at the east end of the hotel was a semi-circular glass solarium.[9]

Hunters Hot Springs attracted tourists and invalids from all parts of the country seeking a cure from its "medicinal" waters. One advertisement of the time even proclaimed that,

> "Rheumatism in all forms and stages, gout, neuralgia, paralysis, palsy, catarrh, asthma, sore throat, acute or chronic loss of voice, blood and skin diseases of all kinds, mineral and vegetable poisoning, dyspepsia, indigestion, and all diseases of the liver, readily succumb to the magical influence of these waters."[10]

According to a 1910 Northern Pacific travel guide, the resort complex also boasted a golf course, tennis courts and an outdoor dancing pavillion.[11] Mineral water was bottled at the resort in a modern bottling plant which, during Prohibition was converted to bottle bootleg liquor for consumption by resort guests.

To reach the Springs, visitors could take any one of the three east or westbound trains which made daily stops at the Springdale station. At the station, "hacks" met every train to take tourists and invalids across the bridge to the Springs.[12]

The decline of Hunters Hot Springs Resort can be attributed to the advent of the automobile and related changes in transportation patterns. Prolonged stays by visitors arriving by train "became a thing of the past."[13] Fewer motoring tourists traveling to Yellowstone National Park via the new paved highway, turned onto the old dirt road leading to the resort. Prohibition contributed further to the demise of Hunters Hot Springs. In an attempt to continue with business as usual the resort began to manufacture its own liquor. The liquor business flourished; however, the clientele shifted away from the wealthy and their families to a less affluent visitor.[14] Finally in 1932 the complex burned to the ground, leaving only a few smaller buildings as testimony to the site's former notoriety.

The importance of the Springdale Bridge to the early development of the Springdale-Hunter's Hot Springs area is documented by the remnants of the former resort, by Northern Pacific Railway adver-

tisements of the time and by the fact that bridges were twice built at this particularly difficult bend on the Yellowstone River.

The Springdale Bridge continued to serve farming, ranching and recreational traffic until 1980 when its deteriorating condition necessitated construction of a new bridge 300 feet downstream.

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FOOTNOTES

[1] Historic American Engineering Record, "Springdale Bridge Inventory Card" [Historian Frederick L. Quivik] 1980

[2] Frederick L. Quivik "Historic Bridges in Montana," Report on file, Montana Department of Highways and Montana Historical Society, 1981, p. 41.

[3] "Hunters Hot Springs," Anaconda Standard, October 27, 1901.

[4] "Early Montana's Fabulous Hotel Dakota," Great Falls Tribune, November 25, 1956.

[5] "Mrs. Mary L. Doan's Story of Childhood at Hunters Hot Springs..." Montana News Association insert, June 26, 1933.

[6] IBID

[7] An Illustrated History of Yellowstone Valley, Montana, Spokane, Washington, Western Historical Publishing Company, 1908, p. 131.

[8] "Early Montana's Fabulous Hotel Dakota," Great Falls Tribune, November 25, 1956.

[9] IBID

[10] "Hunters Hot Springs" Livingston Enterprise: Holiday Enterprise, 1981, p. 18.

[11] Hunters Hot Springs at Springdale, Montana, Northern Pacific Railway Brochure, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1910.

[12] The Official Northern Pacific Railroad Guide, St. Paul, Minnesota, W.C. Riley, 1892, p. 234.

[13] "Early Montana's Fabulous Hotel Dakota," Great Falls Tribune, November 25, 1956.

[14] IBID

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